Chapter 7 Section 3 Homework

Document:

1. Why did the Harappan civilization decline?
2. How did the Aryans class system affect the lives of the people?
3. How did the geography of the land the Aryans conquered affect their lifestyle?

Diagram:

1. How did the Indus River Valley Civilization’s architecture impact how people lived?

**Aryan conquest of India**

The earliest known civilization in [India](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) was that of the Harappans, who established well-organized cities in the valley of the Indus River in the third millennium [BCE](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization). By about 2000 BCE, the civilization was beginning to fade, probably because of climatic changes, which brought about shifts in the rivers and widespread flooding. As the Harappans were weakening, a group of invaders appeared from the steppes of the Caucasus Mountains. The [Aryans](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) were mostly nomadic—herding sheep, horses, and cattle—and like most nomadic peoples, were more warlike than the agricultural inhabitants of northern India. Both by migration and by force of arms, they dominated the area of the upper Indus valley and, over time, spread eastward down the Ganges River.   
  
The Aryans take their name from the word in their [Sanskrit](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) language meaning "noble" and are identified as a language group, not a racial one. (The fact that their area of origin made them lighter skinned than the people they conquered had nothing to do with the language they spoke, so equating "Aryan" with "white" is an incorrect, 19th-century concept made worse by some 20th- and 21st-century racists.) The original Aryans instituted a practice that called for the separation of their peoples from the conquered. Their society was based on four basic classes: priests, warriors, merchants/[artisans](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization), and laborers. That class division did not include the conquered peoples of India, and that attitude was the basis of the [caste system](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) that dominates India to this day.   
  
The Aryans ultimately settled down to an agricultural way of life, but their early years in India resulted in the perpetuation of their herding ways. The plains of northern India provided good grazing land, and their herds of horses and cattle grew. Cattle became the most valuable of commodities—possibly foreshadowing the sacredness of cattle in the Hindu faith. The Aryans' famous horsemanship was a major reason for their military successes, as the Harappans had neither [cavalry](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) nor [chariots](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization). A military society built around the upper-class warriors was reflected in the rowdiness of the Aryans, who celebrated life with drinking, horse racing, and gambling; the latter was a national obsession.   
  
The greatest legacy of the Aryans was the religious works passed down through the priesthood. The [Vedas](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) are a collection of religious rituals handed down through [oral tradition](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) and finally committed to writing when that skill was introduced in about 700 BCE. The ceremonies practiced and the gods worshipped through the Vedas laid the groundwork for the introduction of [Hinduism](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization), the dominant religion of India for some 2,000 years.   
  
After conquering northern India early in the second millennium BCE and the northeastern plains and [Ganges River valley](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) between 1000 and 500 BCE, the Aryans became the dominant inhabitants of India and settled into agricultural pursuits. That less-mobile pastime bred a less-martial society, but the Indians managed to remain fairly isolated from later conquerors. Macedonian conqueror [Alexander the Great](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) spent two years fighting and negotiating in northwestern India and installed a Greek administration in some areas. After his death, however, Candra Gupta Maurya overthrew the [bureaucracy](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) and established the Indian [Mauryan Empire](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization). Not until the [Islamic](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) invasion of India in the 800s [CE](http://ancienthistory.abc-clio.com/Search/Display/596651?terms=aryan+civilization) did outside forces have much luck in penetrating the subcontinent.

